



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10**

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Seattle, WA 98101-3140

OFFICE OF
ECOSYSTEMS, TRIBAL AND
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

December 29, 2011

Kathy Rodriguez
North Fork Ranger District
12730B Highway 12
Orofino, ID 83544

Re: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 10 Comments of the Lower Orogrande
Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD)
EPA Project Number: 10-001-AFS

Dear Ms. Rodriguez:

The EPA has reviewed the FEIS and ROD for the Lower Orogrande project on the North Fork Ranger District of the Clearwater National Forest. Our review was conducted in accordance with our responsibilities and authorities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. The EPA is writing this letter to follow up with you on our concerns raised on the draft EIS regarding impacts to watershed conditions and elk habitat.

The Selected Alternative described in the FEIS/ROD is Alternative 2, which includes watershed improvements (89 miles of road decommissioning and replacement of 16 undersized culverts), vegetative treatments, and road access restrictions. We support the strategy to improve watershed conditions in the Lower Orogrande and the proposed mitigation and monitoring described in the ROD.

We appreciate the Forest Service's staff time during our recent conversation regarding stream conditions and monitoring protocols. We also gained a better understanding of elk habitat effectiveness and security habitat through the response to comment in the FEIS. With implementation of the proposed mitigation and monitoring, our concerns are resolved. Although resources may be limited and preclude monitoring at every site, we acknowledge that the annual monitoring report for the Clearwater National Forest will encompass this project's activities and focus on high value and sensitive areas. We encourage the Forest Service to utilize results from long term monitoring efforts to adjust activities and priorities when needed to promote an upward trend in watershed condition.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the FEIS/ROD. If you have questions concerning this review please contact me at (206) 553-1601 or Lynne McWhorter of my staff at (206) 553-0205 or by email at mcwhorter.lynne@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chr R" followed by a flourish, and the word "for" written to the right.

Christine Reichgott, Manager
Environmental Review and Sediment Management Unit